THREE

Feminism and Critical Theory

(1985)

This selection is a rewritten and expanded version of a talk entitled "Feminism and Critical Theory" (1978) and of the essay "Three Feminist Readings: McCullers, Drabble, Habermas" (1979). Here Spivak aims primarily at reaching a United States feminist audience, which was in 1985 still relatively unfamiliar and often uncomfortable with abstract theoretical writing. Hence she strives for clarity of expression without oversimplification, once again introducing deconstructive reading strategies, this time directed toward the texts of Marx, Freud, and Margaret Drabble.

In the first section, based on the 1978 talk, Spivak demonstrates that Marx's theory of the alienation of the worker from the product of his labor is based on inadequate evidence, because it does not take into account the instance of the womb as workshop, and the very different forms of alienation of product from labor represented by childbirth and by women's domestic work as unpaid, and thus unvalued, labor. Freud's account of penis envy as the chief determinant of femininity similarly avoids confronting the womb as a place of production, or the possibility of womb envy as penis envy's interactive complement. Thus Spivak proposes that feminists use the texts of Marx and Freud by reading them "beyond" themselves, producing a new "common currency" with which to understand society.

In a characteristic maneuver we observed in the previous essay, Spivak addresses the occasionality of publication by reflecting on, in the second section of the essay, the limitations of the first section. Since producing the earlier readings of Marx and Freud, she has recognized the crucial importance of race and the history of colonialism to an international feminist project. These concerns shape her reading of Drabble's novel *The Waterfall* (1971), and inform her exposure of the complicities of First World feminism with the heightened exploitation of Third World women's labor brought about by multinational corporations in the microelectronics indus-

try. Reading the world and our own positions in it demands the skills and attention to textuality required of literary critics in deconstruction's wake.

What has been the itinerary of my thinking during the past few years about the relationships among feminism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, and deconstruction? The issues have been of interest to many people, and the configurations of these fields continue to change. I will not engage here with the various lines of thought that have constituted these changes, but will try instead to mark and reflect upon the way these developments have been inscribed in my own work. The first section of the essays is a version of a talk I gave several years ago. The second section represents a reflection on that earlier work. The third section is an intermediate moment. The fourth section inhabits something like the present.

I.

I cannot speak of feminism in general. I speak of what I do as a woman within literary criticism. My own definition of a woman is very simple: it rests on the word "man" as used in the texts that provide the foundation for the corner of the literary criticism establishment that I inhabit. You might say at this point, defining the word "woman" as resting on the word "man" is a reactionary position. Should I not carve out an independent definition for myself as a woman? Here I must repeat some deconstructive lessons learned over the past decade that I often repeat. One, no rigorous definition of anything is ultimately possible, so that if one wants to, one could go on deconstructing the opposition between man and woman, and finally show that it is a binary opposition that displaces itself.[1] Therefore, "as a deconstructivist," I cannot recommend that kind of dichotomy at all, yet, I feel that definitions are necessary in order to keep us going, to allow us to take a stand. The only way that I can see myself making definitions is in a provisional and polemical one: I construct my definition as a woman not in terms of a woman's putative essence but in terms of words currently in use. "Man" is such a word in common usage. Not *a* word, but *the* word. I therefore fix my glance upon this word even as I question the enterprise of redefining the premises of any theory.

In the broadest possible sense, most critical theory in my part of the academic establishment (Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, the last Barthes) sees the text as that area of the discourse of the human sciences—in the United States called the humanities—in which the *problem* of the discourse of the human sciences is made available. Whereas in other kinds of discourses there is a move toward the final truth of a situation, literature, even within this argument, displays that the truth of a human situation *is* the itinerary

of not being able to find it. In the general discourse of the humanities, there is a sort of search for solutions, whereas in literary discourse there is a playing out of the problem as the solution.

The problem of human discourse is generally seen as articulating itself in the play of, in terms of, three shifting "concepts": language, world, and consciousness. We know no world that is not organized as a language—languages that we cannot possess, for we are operated by those languages as well. The category of language, then, embraces the categories of world and consciousness even as it is determined by them. Strictly speaking, since we are questioning the human being's control over the production of language, the figure that will serve us better is writing, for there the absence of the producer and receiver is taken for granted. A safe figure, seemingly outside of the language-(speech)-writing opposition, is the text—a weave of knowing and not-knowing which is what knowing is. (This organizing principle—language, writing, or text—might itself be a way of holding at bay a randomness incongruent with consciousness.)

The theoreticians of textuality read Marx as a theorist of the world (history and society), as a text of the forces of labor and production-circulation-distribution; and Freud as a theorist of the self, as a text of consciousness and the unconscious. Human textuality can be seen not only *as* world and self, *as* the representation of a world in terms of a self at play with other selves and generating this representation, but also *in* the world and self, all implicated in an "intertextuality." It should be clear from this that such a concept of textuality does not mean a reduction of the world to linguistic texts, books, or a tradition composed of books, criticism in the narrow sense, and teaching.

I am not, then, speaking about Marxist or psychoanalytic criticism as a reductive enterprise which diagnoses the scenario in every book in terms of where it would fit into a Marxist or a psychoanalytical canon. To my way of thinking, the discourse of the literary text is part of a general configuration of textuality, a placing forth of the solution as the unavailability of a unified solution to a unified or homogeneous, generating or receiving, consciousness. This unavailability is often not confronted. It is dodged and the problem apparently solved, in terms perhaps of unifying concepts like "man," the universal contours of a sex-, race-, class-transcendent consciousness as the generating, generated, and receiving consciousness of the text.

I could have broached Marx and Freud more easily. I wanted to say all of the above because, in general, in the literary critical establishment here, those two are seen as reductive models. Now, although nonreductive methods are implicit in both of them, Marx and Freud do also seem to argue in terms of a mode of evidence and demonstration. They seem to bring forth evidence from the world of man or man's self, and thus prove certain kinds

of truths about the world and self. I would risk saying that their descriptions of world and self are based on inadequate evidence. In terms of this conviction, I would like to fix upon the idea of alienation in Marx, and the idea of normality and health in Freud.

One way of moving into Marx is in terms of use-value, exchange-value, and surplus-value. Marx's notion of use-value is that which pertains to a thing as it is directly consumed by an agent. Its exchange-value (after the emergence of the money form) does not relate to its direct fulfillment of a specific need, but is rather assessed in terms of what it can be exchanged for in either labor-power or money. In this process of abstracting through exchange, by making the worker work longer than necessary for subsistence wages or by means of labor-saving machinery, the buyer of the laborer's work gets more (in exchange) than the worker needs for his subsistence while he makes the thing.[2] This "more-worth" (literally, in German, *Mehrwert*) is surplus-value.

One could indefinitely allegorize the relationship of woman within this particular triad—use, exchange, and surplus—by suggesting that woman in the traditional social situation produces more than she is getting in terms of her subsistence, and therefore is a continual source of the production of surpluses, *for* the man who owns her, or *by* the man for the capitalist who owns *his* labor-power. Apart from the fact that the mode of production of housework is not, strictly speaking, capitalist, such an analysis is paradoxical. The contemporary woman, when she seeks financial compensation for housework, seeks the abstraction of use-value into exchange-value. But the situation of the domestic workplace is not one of "pure exchange." The Marxian exigency would make us ask at least two questions: What is the use-value of a woman's unremunerated work for husband or family? Is the willing insertion into the wage structure a curse or a blessing? How should we fight the idea, universally accepted by men, that wages are the only mark of value-producing work? (Not, I think, through the slogan "Housework is beautiful.") What would be the implications of denying women entry into the capitalist economy? Radical feminism can here learn a cautionary lesson from Lenin's capitulation to capitalism.

These are important questions, but they do not necessarily broaden Marxist theory from a feminist point of view. For our purpose, the idea of externalization (*EntäuBerung/VeräuBerung*) or alienation (*Entfremdung*) is of greater interest. Within the capitalist system, the labor process externalizes itself and the worker as commodities. Upon this idea of the resultant fracturing of the human being's relationship to himself and his work as commodities rests the ethical charge of Marx's argument.[3]

I would argue that, in terms of the physical, emotional, legal, custodial, and sentimental situation of the woman's product, the child, this picture of

the human relationship to production, labor, and property is incomplete. The possession of a tangible place of production, the womb, situates women as agents in any theory of production. Marx's dialectics of externalization-alienation followed by fetish formation are inadequate because he has not taken into account one fundamental human relationship to a product and labor.[4]

This does not mean that, if the Marxian account of externalization-alienation were rewritten from a feminist perspective, the special interest of childbirth, childbearing, and childrearing would be inserted. It seems that the entire problematic of sexuality, rather than remaining caught within arguments about overt sociosexual politics, would be fully broached.

Having said this, I would reemphasize the need to interpret reproduction within a Marxian problematic.[5]

In both so-called matrilineal and patrilineal societies the legal possession of the child is an inalienable fact of the property right of the man who "produces" the child.[6] In terms of this legal possession, the common custodial definition, that women are much more nurturing of children, might be seen as a dissimulated reactionary gesture. The man retains legal property rights over the product of the woman's body. On each separate occasion, the custodial decision—which parent will have custody?—is a sentimental questioning of man's right. The current struggle over abortion rights has foregrounded this unacknowledged agenda.

In order not simply to make an exception to man's legal right, or to add a footnote from a feminist perspective to the Marxist text, we must engage and correct the theory of production and alienation upon which the Marxist text is based and with which it functions. As I suggested above, much Marxist feminism works on an analogy with use-value, exchange-value, and surplus-value relationships. Marx's own writings on women and children seek to alleviate their condition in terms of a desexualized labor force.[7] If there were the kind of rewriting that I am proposing, it would be harder to sketch out the rules of economy and social ethics; in fact, one would see that in Marx there is a moment of major transgression where rules for humanity and criticism of societies are based on inadequate evidence. Marx's texts, including *Capital*, presuppose an ethical theory: alienation of labor must be undone because it undermines the agency of the subject in his work and his property. I would like to suggest that if the nature and history of alienation, labor, and the production of property are reexamined in terms of women's work and childbirth, it can lead us to a reading of Marx beyond Marx.

One way of moving into Freud is in terms of his notion of the nature of pain as the deferment of pleasure, especially the later Freud who wrote *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.[8] Freud's spectacular mechanics of imagined,

anticipated, and avoided pain write the subject's history and theory, and constantly broach the never-quite-defined concept of normality: anxiety, inhibition, paranoia, schizophrenia, melancholy, mourning. I would like to suggest that in the womb, a tangible place of production, there is the possibility that pain exists *within* the concepts of normality and productivity. (This is not to sentimentalize the pain of childbirth.) The problematizing of the phenomenal identity of pleasure and unpleasure should not be operated only through the logic of repression. The opposition pleasure-pain is questioned in the physiological "normality" of woman.

If one were to look at the never-quite-defined concepts of normality and health that run through and are submerged in Freud's texts, one would have to redefine the nature of pain. Pain does not operate in the same way in men and women. Once again, this deconstructive move will make it much harder to devise the rules.

Freud's best-known determinant of femininity is penis envy. The most crucial text of this argument is the essay on femininity in *New Introductory Lectures*.[9] There, Freud begins to argue that the little girl is a little boy before she discovers sex. As Luce Irigaray and others have shown, Freud does not take the womb into account.[10] Our mood, since we carry the womb as well as being carried by it, should be corrective.[11] We might chart the itinerary of womb envy in the production of a theory of consciousness: the idea of the womb as a place of production is avoided both in Marx and in Freud. (There are exceptions to such a generalization, especially among American neo-Freudians such as Erich Fromm. I am speaking here about invariable presuppositions, even among such exceptions.) In Freud the genital stage is preeminently phallic, not clitoral or vaginal. This particular gap in Freud is significant. The hysteron remains the place which constitutes only the text of hysteria. Everywhere there is a nonconfrontation of the idea of the womb as a workshop, except to produce a surrogate penis. Our task in rewriting the text of Freud is not so much to declare it possible to reject the idea of penis envy, but to make available the idea of a womb envy as something that interacts with the idea of penis envy to determine human sexuality and the production of society.[12]

These are some questions that may be asked of the Freudian and Marxist "grounds" or theoretical "bases" that operate our ideas of world and self. We might want to ignore them altogether and say that the business of literary criticism has to do with neither your gender (such a suggestion seems hopelessly dated) nor the theories of revolution or psychoanalysis. Criticism must remain resolutely neuter and practical. One should not mistake the grounds out of which the ideas of world and self are reproduced with the business of the appreciation of the literary text. If one looks closely, one will see that, whether one diagnoses the names or not, certain kinds of thoughts are presupposed by the notions of world and consciousness of the most "practical" critic. Part of the feminist enterprise might well be to provide "evidence" so that these great male texts do not become great adversaries, or models from whom we take our ideas and then revise or reassess them. These texts must be rewritten so that there is new material for the grasping of the production and determination of literature within the general production and determination of consciousness and society. After all, the people who produce literature, male and female, are also moved by general ideas of world and consciousness to which they cannot give a name.

If we work in this way, the common currency of the understanding of society will change. I think that kind of change, the coining of new money, is necessary. I certainly believe that such work is supplemented by research into women's writing and research into the conditions of women in the past. The kind of work I have outlined would infiltrate the male academy and redo the terms of our understanding of the context and substance of literature as part of the human enterprise.

II.

What seems missing in these earlier remarks is the dimension of race. Today I would see my work as the developing of a reading method that is sensitive to gender, race, and class. The earlier remarks would apply indirectly to the development of class-sensitive and directly to the development of gender-sensitive readings.

In the matter of race-sensitive analyses, the chief problem of American feminist criticism is its identification of racism as such with the constitution of racism in America. Thus, today I see the object of investigation to be not only the history of "Third World women" or their testimony, but also the production, through the great European theories, often by way of literature, of the colonial object. As long as American feminists understand "history" as a positivistic empiricism that scorns "theory" and therefore remains ignorant of its own, the "Third World" as its object of study will remain constituted by those hegemonic First World intellectual practices.[13]

My attitude toward Freud today involves a broader critique of his entire project. It is a critique not only of Freud's masculism but of nuclear-familial psychoanalytical theories of the constitution of the sexed subject. Such a critique extends to alternative scenarios to Freud that keep to the nuclear parent-child model; as it does to the offer of Greek mythical alternatives to Oedipus as the regulative type-case of the model itself; as it does to the romantic notion that an extended family, especially a community of women, would necessarily cure the ills of the nuclear family. My concern with the production of colonial discourse thus touches my critique of Freud as well as most Western feminist challenges to Freud. The extended or

corporate family is a socioeconomic (indeed, on occasion political) organization which makes sexual constitution irreducibly complicit with historical and political economy.[14] To learn to read that way is to understand that the literature of the world, itself accessible only to a few, is not tied by the concrete universals of a network of archetypes—a theory that was entailed by the consolidation of a political excuse—but by a textuality of material, ideological, psychosexual production. This articulation sharpens a general presupposition of my earlier remarks.

Pursuing these considerations, I proposed recently an analysis of "the discourse of the clitoris."[15] The reactions to that proposal have been interesting in the context I discuss above. A certain response from American lesbian feminists can be represented by the following quotation: "In this open-ended definition of phallus/semination as organically *omnipotent* the only recourse is to name the clitoris as orgasmically phallic and to call the uterus the reproductive extension of the phallus....You must stop thinking of yourself privileged as a heterosexual woman."[16] Because of its physiologistic orientation, the first part of this objection sees my naming of the clitoris as a repetition of Freud's situating of it as a "little penis." To the second part of the objection I customarily respond: "You're right, and one cannot know how far one succeeds. Yet, the effort to put First World lesbianism in its place is not necessarily reducible to pride in female heterosexuality." Other uses of my suggestion, both supportive and adverse, have also reduced the discourse of the clitoris to a physiological fantasy. In the interest of the broadening scope of my critique, I should like to reemphasize that the clitoris, even as I acknowledge and honor its irreducible physiological effect, is, in this reading, also a shorthand for women's excess in all areas of production and practice, an excess which must be brought under control to keep business going as usual.[17]

My attitude toward Marxism now recognizes the historical antagonism between Marxism and feminism, *on both sides*. Hardcore Marxism at best dismisses and at worst patronizes the importance of women's struggle. On the other hand, not only the history of European feminism in its opposition to Bolshevik and Social Democrat women, but the conflict between the suffrage movement and the union movement in this country must be taken into account. This historical problem will not be solved by saying that we need more than an analysis of capitalism to understand male dominance, or that the sexual division of labor as the primary determinant is already given in the texts of Marx. I prefer the work that sees that the "essential truth" of Marxism or feminism cannot be separated from its history. My present work relates this to the ideological development of the theory of the imagination in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. I am interested in class analysis of families as it is being practiced by, among others, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Heidi Hartmann, Nancy Hartsock, and Annette Kuhn. I am myself bent upon reading the text of international feminism as operated by the production and realization of surplus-value. My own earlier concern with the specific theme of reproductive (non)alienation seems to me today to be heavily enough touched by a nuclear-familial hystero-centrism to be open to the critique of psychoanalytic feminism that I suggest above.

On the other hand, if sexual reproduction is seen as the production of a product by an irreducibly determinate means (conjunction of semination and ovulation), in an irreducibly determinate mode (heterogeneous combination of domestic and politico-civil economy), entailing a minimal variation of social relations, then two original Marxist categories would be put into question: use-value as the measure of communist production and absolute surplus-value as the motor of primitive (capitalist) accumulation. For the first: the child, although not a commodity, is also not produced for immediate and adequate consumption or direct exchange. For the second: the premise that the difference between a subsistence wage and labor-power's potential of production is the origin of original accumulation can only be advanced if reproduction is seen as identical with subsistence; in fact, the reproduction and maintenance of children would make heterogeneous the original calculation in terms of something like the slow displacement of value from fixed capital to commodity.[18] These insights take the critique of wage-labor in unexpected directions.

When I earlier touched upon the relationship between wage theory and "women's work," I had not yet read the autonomist arguments about wage and work as best developed in the work of Antonio Negri.[19] Exigencies of work and limitations of scholarship and experience permitting, I would like next to study the relationship between domestic and political economies in order to establish the subversive power of "women's work" in models for the construction of a "revolutionary subject." Negri sees this possibility in the inevitable consumerism that socialized capitalism must nurture. Commodity consumption, even as it realizes surplus-value as profit, does not itself produce the value and therefore persistently exacerbates a crisis.[20] It is through reversing and displacing this tendency within consumerism, Negri suggests, that the "revolutionary subject" can be released. Mainstream English Marxists sometimes think that such an upheaval can be brought about by political interventionist teaching of literature. Some French intellectuals think this tendency is inherent in the "pagan tradition," which pluralizes the now-defunct narratives of social justice still endorsed by traditional Marxists in a postindustrial world. In contrast, I now argue as follows:

> It is women's work that has continuously survived within not only the vari-

eties of capitalism but other historical and geographical modes of production. The economic, political, ideological, and legal heterogeneity of the relationship between the definitive mode of production and race- and class-differentiated women's and wives' work is abundantly recorded. Rather than the refusal to work of the freed Jamaican slaves in 1834, which is cited by Marx as the only example of zero-work, quickly recuperated by imperialist maneuvers, it is the long history of women's work which is a sustained example of zero-work: work not only outside of wage-work, but, *in one way or another*, "outside" of the definitive modes of production. The displacement required here is a transvaluation, an uncatastrophic *im*plosion of the search for validation via the circuit of productivity. Rather than a miniaturized and thus controlled metaphor for civil society and the state, the power of the *oikos*, domestic economy, can be used as the model of the foreign body unwittingly nurtured by the *polis*.[21]

With psychoanalytic feminism, then, an invocation of history and politics leads us back to the place of psychoanalysis in colonialism. With Marxist feminism, an invocation of the economic text foregrounds the operations of the new imperialism. The discourse of race has come to claim its importance in this way in my work.

I am still moved by the reversal-displacement morphology of deconstruction, crediting the asymmetry of the "interest" of the historical moment. Investigating the hidden ethico-political agenda of differentiations constitutive of knowledge and judgment interests me even more. It is also the deconstructive view that keeps me resisting an essentialist freezing of the concepts of gender, race, and class. I look rather at the repeated agenda of the situational production of those concepts and our complicity in such a production. This aspect of deconstruction will not allow the establishment of a hegemonic "global theory" of feminism.

Over the last few years, however, I have also begun to see that, rather than deconstruction simply opening a way for feminists, the figure and discourse of women opened the way for Derrida as well. His incipient discourse of women surfaced in *Spurs* (first published as "La Question du Style" in 1975), which also articulates the thematics of "interest" crucial to political deconstruction.[22] This study marks his move from the critical deconstruction of phallocentrism to "affirmative" deconstruction (Derrida's phrase). It is at this point that Derrida's work seems to become less interesting for Marxism.[23] The early Derrida can certainly be shown to be useful for feminist practice, but why is it that, when he writes under the sign of woman, as it were, his work becomes solipsistic and marginal? What is it in the history of that sign that allows this to happen? I will hold this question until the end of this essay.

III.

In 1979 and 1980, concerns of race and class were beginning to invade my mind. What follows is in some sense a checklist of quotations from Margaret Drabble's *The Waterfall* that shows the uneasy presence of those concerns.[24] Reading literature "well" is in itself a questionable good and can indeed be sometimes productive of harm and "aesthetic" apathy within its ideological framing. My suggestion is to use literature, with a feminist perspective, as a "nonexpository" theory of practice.

Drabble has a version of "the best education" in the Western world: a First Class in English from Oxbridge. The tradition of academic radicalism in England is strong. Drabble was at Cambridge when the prestigious journal *New Left Review* was being organized. I am not averse to a bit of simple biographical detail: I began to reread *The Waterfall* with these things in mind as well as the worrying thoughts about sex, race, and class.

Like many woman writers, Drabble creates an extreme situation, presumably, to answer the question, "Why does love happen?" In place of the mainstream objectification and idolization of the loved person, she situates her protagonist, Jane, in the most inaccessible privacy—at the moment of birthing, alone by choice. Lucy, her cousin, and James, Lucy's husband, take turns watching over her in the empty house as she regains her strength. *The Waterfall* is the story of Jane's love affair with James. In place of legalized or merely possessive ardor toward the product of his own body, Drabble gives to James the problem of relating to the birthing woman through the birth of "another man's child." Jane looks and smells dreadful. There is blood and sweat on the crumpled sheets. And yet "love" happens. Drabble slows language down excruciatingly as Jane records how, wonders why. It is possible that Drabble is taking up the challenge of feminine "passivity" and making it the tool of analytic strength. Many answers emerge. I will quote two, to show how provisional and self-suspending Jane can be:

I loved him inevitably, of necessity. Anyone could have foreseen it, given those facts: a lonely woman, in an empty world. Surely I would have loved anyone who might have shown me kindness.... But of course it's not true, it could not have been anyone else.... I know that it was not inevitable: it was a miracle....What I deserved was what I had made: solitude, or a repetition of pain. What I received was grace. Grace and miracles. I don't much care for my terminology. Though at least it lacks that most disastrous concept, the concept of free will. Perhaps I could make a religion that denied free will, that placed God in his true place, arbitrary, carelessly kind, idly malicious, intermittently attentive, and himself subject, as Zeus was, to necessity. Necessity is my God. Necessity lay with me when James did [pp. 49–50].

And, in another place, the "opposite" answer—random contingencies:

> I loved James because he was what I had never had: because he belonged to my cousin: because he was kind to his own child: because he looked unkind: because I saw his naked wrists against a striped tea towel once, seven years ago. Because he addressed me an intimate question upon a beach on Christmas Day. Because he helped himself to a drink when I did not dare to accept the offer of one. Because he was not serious, because his parents lived in South Kensington and were mysteriously depraved. Ah, perfect love. For these reasons, was it, that I lay there, drowned was it, drowned or stranded, waiting for him, waiting to die and drown there, in the oceans of our flowing bodies, in the white sea of that strange familiar bed [p. 67].

If the argument for necessity is arrived at by slippery happenstance from thought to thought, each item on this list of contingencies has a plausibility that is far from random.

She considers the problem of making women rivals in terms of the man who possesses them. There is a peculiar agreement between Lucy and herself before the affair begins:

> I wonder why people marry? Lucy continued, in a tone of such academic flatness that the topic seemed robbed of any danger. I don't know, said Jane, with equal calm.... So arbitrary, really, said Lucy, spreading butter on the toast. It would be nice, said Jane, to think there were reasons.... Do you think so? said Lucy. Sometimes I prefer to think we are victims.... If there were a reason, said Jane, one would be all the more a victim. She paused, thought, ate a mouthful of the toast. I am wounded, therefore I bleed. I am human, therefore I suffer. Those aren't reasons you're describing, said Lucy.... And from upstairs the baby's cry reached them—thin, wailing, desperate. Hearing it, the two women looked at each other, and for some reason smiled [pp. 26–27].

This, of course, is no overt agreement, but simply a hint that the "reason" for female bonding has something to do with a baby's cry. For example, Jane records her own deliberate part in deceiving Lucy this way: "I forgot Lucy. I did not think of her—or only occasionally, lying awake at night *as the baby cried*, I would think of her, with pangs of irrelevant inquiry, pangs endured not by me and in me, but at a distance, pangs as sorrowful and irrelevant as another person's pain" (p. 48; italics mine).

Jane records inconclusively her gut reaction to the supposed natural connection between parent and child: "Blood is blood, and it is not good enough to say that children are for the motherly, as Brecht said, for there

are many ways of unmothering a woman, or unfathering a man.... And yet, how can I deny that it gave me pleasure to see James hold her in his arms for me? The man I loved and the child to whom I had given birth" (p. 48).

The loose ending of the book also makes Jane's story an extreme case. Is this love going to last, prove itself to be "true," and bring Jane security and Jane and James happiness? Or is it resolutely "liberated," overprotesting its own impermanence, and thus falling in with the times? Neither. The melodramatic and satisfactory ending, the accident which might have killed James, does not in fact do so. It merely reveals all to Lucy, does not end the book, and reduces all to a humdrum kind of double life.

These are not bad answers; necessity if all else fails, or perhaps random contingency; an attempt not to trivialize women; blood bonds between mothers and daughters; love free of social security. The problem for a reader like me is that the entire question is carried on in what I can only see as a privileged atmosphere. I am not saying, of course, that Jane is Drabble (although that, too, is true in a complicated way). I am saying that Drabble considers the story of so privileged a woman the most worth telling. Not the well-bred lady of pulp fiction, but an impossible princess who mentions in one passing sentence toward the beginning of the book that her poems are read on the BBC.

It is not that Drabble does not want to rest her probing and sensitive fingers on the problem of class, if not race. The account of Jane's family's class prejudice is incisively told. Her father is headmaster of a public school.

> There was one child I shall always remember, a small thin child...whose father, he proudly told us, was standing as Labour Candidate for a hopeless seat in an imminent General Election. My father teased him unmercifully, asking questions that the poor child could not begin to answer, making elaborate and hideous semantic jokes about the fruits of labor, throwing in familiar references to prominent Tories that were quite wasted on such...tender ears; and the poor child sat there, staring at his roast beef...turning redder and redder, and trying, pathetically, sycophantically, to smile. I hated my father at that instant [pp. 56–57].

Yet Drabble's Jane is made to share the lightest touch of her parents' prejudice. The part I have elided is a mocking reference to the child's large red ears. For her the most important issue remains sexual deprivation, sexual choice. *The Waterfall*, the name of a card trick, is also the name of Jane's orgasms, James's gift to her.

But perhaps Drabble is ironic when she creates so classbound and yet so analytic a Jane? It is a possibility, of course, but Jane's identification with the author of the narrative makes this doubtful. If there is irony to be generated

here, it must come, as they say, from "outside the book."

Rather than imposing my irony, I attempt to find the figure of Jane as narrator helpful. Drabble manipulates her to examine the conditions of production and determination of microstructural heterosexual attitudes within her chosen enclosure. This enclosure is important because it is from here that rules come. Jane is made to realize that there are no fixed new rules in the book, not as yet. First World feminists are up against that fact, every day. This should not become an excuse but should remain a delicate responsibility: "If I need a morality, I will create one: a new ladder, a new virtue. If I need to understand what I am doing, if I cannot act without my own approbation—and I must act, I have changed, I am no longer capable of inaction—then I will invent a morality that condones me. Though by doing so, I risk condemning all that I have been" (pp. 52–53).

If the cautions of deconstruction are heeded—the contingency that the desire to "understand" and "change" are as much symptomatic as they are revolutionary—merely to fill in the void with rules will spoil the case again, for women as for human beings. We must strive moment by moment to practice a taxonomy of different forms of understanding, different forms of change, dependent perhaps upon resemblance and seeming substitutability—figuration—rather than on the self-identical category of truth:

> Because it's obvious that I haven't told the truth, about myself and James. How could I? Why, more significantly, should I?... Of the truth, I haven't told enough. I flinched at the conclusion and can even see in my hesitance a virtue: it is dishonest, it is inartistic, but it is a virtue, such discretion, in the moral world of love.... The names of qualities are interchangeable: vice, virtue: redemption, corruption: courage, weakness: and hence the confusion of abstraction, the proliferation of aphorism and paradox. In the human world, perhaps there are merely likenesses.... The qualities, they depended on the supposed true end of life.... Salvation, damnation.... I do not know which of these two James represented. Hysterical terms, maybe; religious terms, yet again. But then life is a serious matter, and it is not merely hysteria that acknowledges this fact: for men as well as women have been known to acknowledge it. I must make an effort to comprehend it. I will take it all to pieces. I will resolve it to parts, and then I will put it together again, I will reconstitute it in a form that I can accept, a fictitious form [pp. 46, 51, 52].

The categories by which one understands, the qualities of plus and minus, are revealing themselves as arbitrary, situational. Drabble's Jane's way out—to resolve and reconstitute life into an acceptable fictional form that need not, perhaps, worry too much about the categorical problems—seems, by itself, a classical privileging of the aesthetic, for Drabble hints at the limits of self-interpretation through a gesture that is accessible to the humanist academic. Within a fictional form, she confides that the exigencies of a narrative's unity had not allowed her to report the whole truth. She then changes from the third person to the first.

What can a literary critic do with this? Notice that the move is absurdity twice compounded, since the discourse reflecting the constraints of fiction-making goes on then to fabricate another fictive text. Notice further that the narrator who tells us about the impossibility of truth in fiction—the classic privilege of metaphor—is a metaphor as well.[25]

I should choose a simpler course. I should acknowledge this global dismissal of any narrative speculation about the nature of truth and then dismiss it in turn, since it might unwittingly suggest that there is somewhere a way of speaking about truth in "truthful" language, that a speaker can somewhere get rid of the structural unconscious and speak without role-playing. Having taken note of the frame, I will thus explain the point Jane is making here and relate it to what, I suppose, the critical view above would call "the anthropomorphic world"; when one takes a rational or aesthetic distance from oneself one gives oneself up to the conveniently classifying macrostructures, a move dramatized by Drabble's third-person narrator. By contrast, when one involves oneself in the microstructural moments of practice that make possible and undermine every macrostructural theory, one falls, as it were, into the deep waters of a first person who recognizes the limits of understanding and change, indeed the precarious necessity of the micro-macro opposition, yet is bound not to give up.

The risks of first-person narrative prove too much for Drabble's fictive Jane. She wants to plot her narrative in terms of the paradoxical category—"pure corrupted love"—that allows her to *make* a fiction rather than try, *in* fiction, to report on the unreliability of categories: "I want to get back to that schizoid third-person dialogue. I've one or two more sordid conditions to describe, and then I can get back there to that isolated world of pure corrupted love" (p. 130). To return us to the detached and macrostructural third-person narrative after exposing its limits could be an aesthetic allegory of deconstructive practice.

Thus Drabble fills the void of the female consciousness with meticulous and helpful articulation, though she seems thwarted in any serious presentation of the problems of race and class, and of the marginality of sex. She engages in that microstructural dystopia, the sexual situation in extremis, that begins to seem more and more a part of women's fiction. Even within those limitations, our motto cannot be Jane's "I prefer to suffer, I think," the privatist cry of heroic liberal women; it might rather be the lesson of the scene of writing of *The Waterfall*; to return to the third person with its grounds mined under.

IV.

It is no doubt useful to decipher women's fiction in this way for feminist students and colleagues in American academia. I am less patient with literary texts today, even those produced by women. We must of course remind ourselves, our positivist feminist colleagues in charge of creating the discipline of women's studies, and our anxious students, that essentialism is a trap. It seems more important to learn to understand that the world's women do not all relate to the privileging of essence, especially through "fiction," or "literature," in quite the same way.

In Seoul, South Korea, in March 1982, 237 women workers in a factory owned by Control Data, a Minnesota-based multinational corporation, struck over a demand for a wage raise. Six union leaders were dismissed and imprisoned. In July, the women took hostage two visiting U.S. vice-presidents, demanding reinstatement of the union leaders. Control Data's main office was willing to release the women; the Korean government was reluctant. On July 16, the Korean male workers at the factory beat up the female workers and ended the dispute. Many of the women were injured; two suffered miscarriages.

To grasp this narrative's overdeterminations (the many telescoped lines—sometimes noncoherent, often contradictory, perhaps discontinuous—that allow us to determine the reference point of a single "event" or cluster of "events") would require a complicated analysis.[26] Here, too, I will give no more than a checklist of the determinants. In the earlier stages of industrial capitalism, the colonies provided the raw materials so that the colonizing countries could develop their manufacturing industrial base. Indigenous production was thus crippled or destroyed. To minimize circulation time, industrial capitalism needed to establish due process, and such civilizing instruments as railways, postal services, and a uniformly graded system of education. This, together with the labor movements in the First World and the mechanisms of the welfare state, slowly made it imperative that manufacturing itself be carried out on the soil of the Third World, where labor can make many fewer demands, and the governments are mortgaged. In the case of the telecommunications industry, which makes old machinery obsolete at a more rapid pace than it takes to absorb its value in the commodity, this is particularly practical.

The incident that I recounted above, not at all uncommon in the multinational arena, complicates our assumptions about women's entry into the age of computers and the modernization of "women in development," especially in terms of our daily theorizing and practice. It should make us confront the discontinuities and contradictions in our assumptions about women's freedom to work outside the house, and the sustaining virtues of the working-class family. The fact that these workers were women was not merely because, like those Belgian lacemakers, oriental women have small and supple fingers. It is also because they are the true army of surplus labor. No one, including their men, will agitate for an adequate wage. In a two-job family, the man saves face if the woman makes less, even for a comparable job.

Does this make Third World men more sexist than David Rockefeller? The nativist argument that says "do not question Third World mores" is of course unexamined imperialism. There *is* something like an answer to this vexed question, which makes problematic the ground upon which we base our own intellectual and political activities. No one can deny the dynamism and civilizing power of socialized capital. The irreducible search for greater production of surplus-value (dissimulated as, simply, "productivity") through technological advancement; the corresponding necessity to train a consumer who will need what is produced and thus help realize surplus-value as profit; the tax breaks associated with supporting humanist ideology through "corporate philanthropy"—all conspire to "civilize." These motives do not exist on a large scale in a comprador economy like that of South Korea, which is neither the necessary recipient nor the agent of socialized capital. The surplus-value is realized elsewhere. The nuclear family does not have a transcendent ennobling power. The fact that ideology and the ideology of marriage have developed in the West since the English revolution of the seventeenth century has something like a relationship to the rise of meritocratic individualism.

These possibilities overdetermine any generalization about universal parenting based on American, Western European, or laundered anthropological speculation.

Socialized capital kills by remote control. In this case, too, the American managers watched while the South Korean men decimated their women. The managers denied charges. One remark made by a member of Control Data management, as reported in *Multinational Monitor*, seemed symptomatic in its self-protective cruelty: "Although 'it's true' Chae lost her baby, 'this is not the first miscarriage she's had. She's had two before this.'"[27] However active in the production of civilization as a byproduct, socialized capital has not moved far from the presuppositions of a slavery mode of production. "In Roman theory, the agricultural slave was designated an *instrumentum vocale*, the speaking tool, one grade away from the livestock that constituted an *instrumentum semi-vocale*, and two from the implement which was an *instrumentum mutum*."[28]

One of Control Data's radio commercials speaks of how its computers open the door to knowledge, at home or in the workplace, for men and women alike. The acronym of the computer system in this ad is PLATO. One might speculate that this noble name helps to dissimulate a quantitative

and formula-permutational vision of knowledge as an instrument of efficiency and exploitation by surrounding it with an aura of the unique and subject-expressive wisdom at the very root of "democracy." The undoubted historical-symbolic value of the acronym PLATO shares in the effacement of class history that is the project of "civilization" as such: "the slave mode of production which underlay Athenian civilization necessarily found its most pristine ideological expression in the privileged social stratum of the city, whose intellectual heights its surplus labour in the silent depths below the *polis* made possible."[29]

Why is it, I asked above, that when Derrida writes under the sign of woman his work becomes solipsistic and marginal?

His discovery of the figure of woman is in terms of a critique of propriation—proper-ing, as in the proper name (patronymic) or property.[30] Suffice it to say here that, in thus differentiating himself from the phallocentric tradition under the aegis of a(n idealized) woman who is the "sign" of the indeterminate, of that which has impropriety as its property, Derrida cannot think that the sign "woman" is indeterminate by virtue of its access to the tyranny of the text of the proper. It is this tyranny of the "proper"—in the sense of that which produces both property and proper names of the patronymic—that I have called the suppression of the clitoris, and that the news item about Control Data illustrates.[31]

Derrida has written a magically orchestrated book—*La carte postale*—on philosophy as telecommunication (Control Data's business) using an absent, unnamed, and sexually indeterminate woman (Control Data's victim) as a vehicle for the reinterpretation of the relationship between Socrates and Plato (Control Data's acronym) taking it through Freud and beyond. The determination of that book is a parable of my argument. Here deconstruction becomes complicit with an essentialist bourgeois feminism. The following paragraph appeared recently in *Ms.*: "Control Data is among those enlightened corporations that offer social-service leaves.... Kit Ketchum, former treasurer of Minnesota NOW, applied for and got a full year with pay to work at NOW's national office in Washington, D.C. She writes: 'I commend Control Data for their commitment to employing and promoting women....' Why not suggest this to your employer?"[32] Bourgeois feminism, because of a blindness to the *multi*national theater, dissimulated by "clean" national practice and fostered by the dominant ideology, can participate in the tyranny of the proper and see in Control Data an extender of the Platonic mandate to women in general.

The dissimulation of political economy is in and by ideology. What is at work and can be used in that operation is at least the ideology of nation-states, nationalism, national liberation, ethnicity, and religion. Feminism lives in the master text as well as in the pores. It is not the determinant of the last instance. I think less easily of "changing the world" than I did in the past. I teach a small number of the holders of the can(n)on, male or female, feminist or masculist, how to read their own texts, as best I can.

NOTES

1. For an explanation of this aspect of deconstruction, see Spivak, "Translator's Preface" to Derrida, *Of Grammatology*.
2. It seems appropriate to note, by using a masculine pronoun, that Marx's standard worker is male.
3. I am not suggesting this by way of what Harry Braverman describes as "that favorite hobby horse of recent years which has been taken from Marx without the least understanding of its significance" in *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1974), pp. 27, 28. Simply put, alienation in Hegel is that structural emergence of negation which allows a thing to sublate itself. The worker's alienation from the product of his labor under capitalism is a particular case of alienation. Marx does not question its specifically philosophical justice. The revolutionary upheaval of this philosophical or morphological justice is, strictly speaking, also a harnessing of the principle of alienation, the negation of a negation. It is a mark of the individualistic ideology of liberalism that it understands alienation as only the pathetic predicament of the oppressed worker.
4. In this connection, we should note the metaphors of sexuality in *Capital*.
5. I remember with pleasure my encounter, at the initial presentation of this paper, with Mary O'Brien, who said she was working on precisely this issue, and who later produced the excellent book *The Politics of Reproduction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981). I should mention here that the suggestion that mother and daughter have "the same body" and therefore the female child experiences what amounts to an unalienated pre-Oedipality argues from an individualist-pathetic view of alienation and locates as *discovery* the essentialist *presuppositions* about the sexed body's identity. This reversal of Freud remains also a legitimation.
6. See Jack Goody, *Production and Reproduction: A Comparative Study of the Domestic Domain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), and Maurice Godelier, "The Origins of Male Domination," *New Left Review* 127 (May/June 1981), pp. 3–17.
7. Collected in *Karl Marx on Education, Women, and Children* (New York: Viking Press, 1977).
8. No feminist reading of this text is now complete without Jacques Derrida's "Speculer—sur Freud," *La Carte postale: de Socrate à Freud et au-delà* (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1980).
9. Freud, *Works*, vol. 22.

10. Luce Irigaray, "La tâche aveugle d'un vieux rêve de symmétrie," in *Speculum de l'autre femme* (Paris: Minuit, 1974).
11. I have moved, as I explain later, from womb envy, still bound to the closed circle of coupling, to the suppression of the clitoris. The mediating moment would be the appropriation of the vagina, as in Derrida: see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman," in Mark Krupnick, ed., *Displacement: Derrida and After* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 169–95.
12. One way to develop notions of womb envy would be in speculation about a female fetish. If, by way of rather obvious historico-sexual determinations, the typical male fetish can be said to be the phallus, given to and taken away from the mother ("Fetishism," Freud, *Works*, vol. 21), then the female imagination in search of a name from a revered sector of masculist culture might well fabricate a fetish that would operate the giving and taking away of a womb to a father. I have read Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in this way. The play between such a gesture and the Kantian socio-ethical framework of the novel makes it exemplary of the ideology of moral and practical imagination in the Western European literature of the nineteenth century. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," in "*Race,*" *Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 262–80; first published in *Critical Inquiry* 12:1 (Autumn 1985), pp. 243–61.
13. As I have repeatedly insisted, the limits of hegemonic ideology are larger than so-called individual consciousness and personal goodwill. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Politics of Interpretations," in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Methuen, 1987), pp. 118–33; and "A Response to Annette Kolodny," widely publicized but not yet published.
14. This critique should be distinguished from that of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, et al. (New York: Viking Press, 1977), with which I am in general agreement. Its authors insist that the family romance should be seen as inscribed within politico-economic domination and exploitation. My argument is that the family romance effect should be situated within a larger familial formation.
15. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "French Feminism in an International Frame," in *Worlds*, pp. 134–53.
16. Pat Rezabek, unpublished letter.
17. What in man exceeds the closed circle of coupling in sexual reproduction is the entire "public domain."
18. I understand Lise Vogel is currently developing this analysis. One could analogize directly, for example, with a passage such as Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 710. Hereafter cited in text as *GR*, followed by page number.

19. Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, trans. Harry Cleaver, et al. (New York: J. F. Bergen, 1984). For another perspective on a similar argument, see Jacques Donzelot, "Pleasure in Work," *Ideology & Consciousness* 9 (Winter 1981–82), pp. 3–28.
20. An excellent elucidation of this mechanism is to be found in James O'Connor, "The Meaning of Crisis," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 5:3 (1981), pp. 317–29.
21. The self-citation is from "Woman in Derrida," unpublished lecture, School of Criticism and Theory, Northwestern University, 6 July 1982. In it, my references are to: Jean-François Lyotard, *Instructions païens* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1978); Tony Bennett, *Formalism and Marxism* (London: Methuen, 1979), p. 145 and passim; and Marx, *GR*, 326.
22. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Love Me, Love My Ombre, Elle," *Diacritics* 14:4 (Winter 1984), pp. 19–36.
23. Michael Ryan, *Marxism and Deconstruction: A Critical Articulation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. xiv.
24. Margaret Drabble, *The Waterfall* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971). Subsequent references are included in the text. Part of this reading has appeared in a slightly different form as "Three Feminist Readings: McCullers, Drabble, Habermas," in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 35:1/2 (Fall/Winter 1979–80), pp. 15–34.
25. As in Paul de Man's analysis of Proust in *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 18.
26. For definitions of "overdetermination," see Freud, *Works*, vol. 4, pp. 279–304, and Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, pp. 89–128.
27. "Was Headquarters Responsible? Women Beat Up at Control Data, Korea," *Multinational Monitor* 3:10 (September 1982), p. 16.
28. Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (London: Verso, 1978), pp. 24–25.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40.
30. See Spivak, "Love Me."
31. I have already made the point that "clitoris" here is not meant in a physiological sense alone. I had initially proposed it as the reinscription of a certain physiological emphasis on the clitoris in some varieties of French feminism. I use it as a name (close to a metonym) for women in excess of coupling-mothering. When this excess is in competition in the public domain, it is suppressed in one way or another. I can do no better than refer to the very end of an earlier essay, where I devise a list that makes the scope of the metonym explicit. See Spivak, "French Feminism," *Worlds*, p. 184.
32. Anne Pillsbury, "Penny Stocks—A Good Gamble for the Small Investor," *Ms.* 10:11 (May 1982), p. 30. In this connection, it is interesting to note how so

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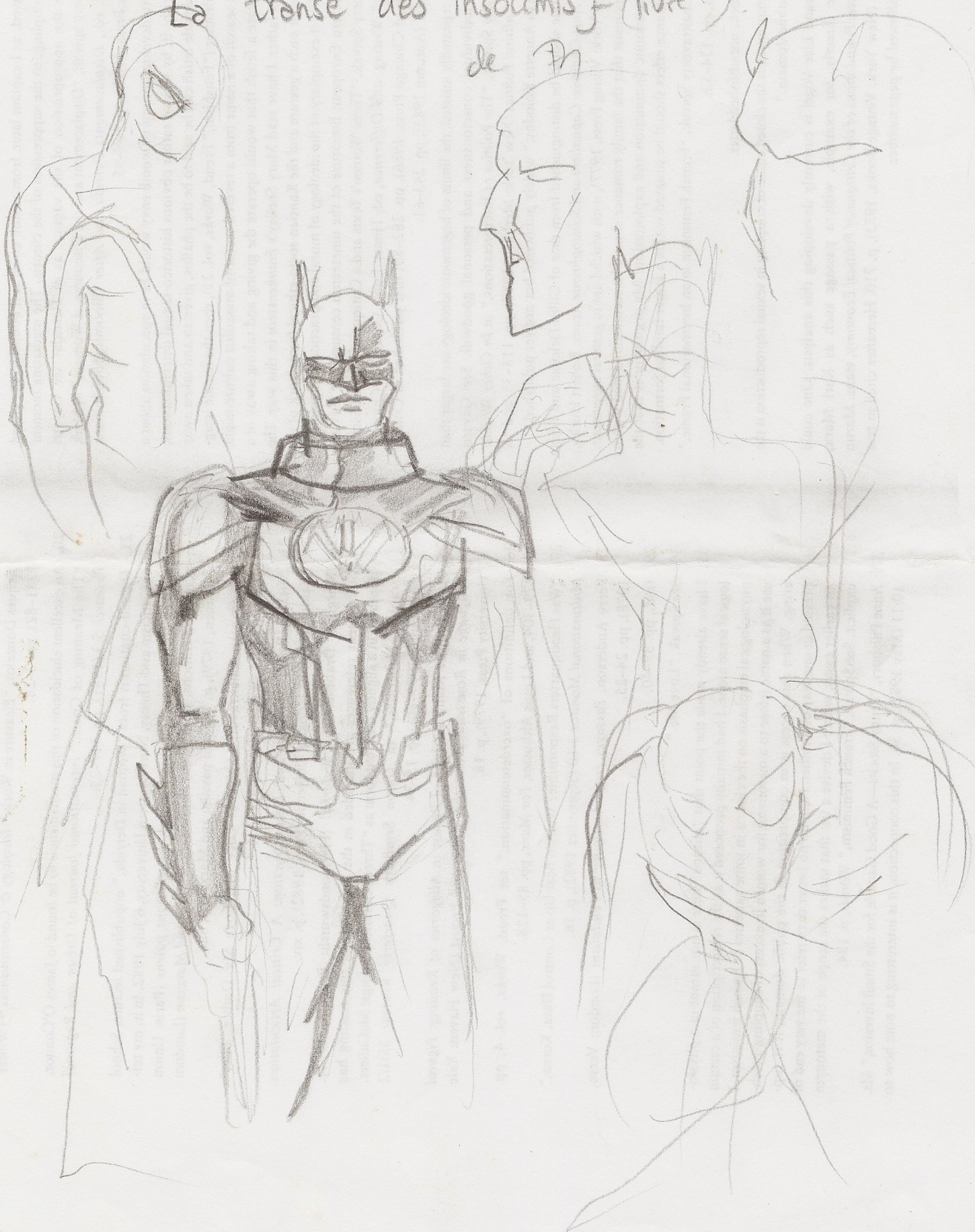
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